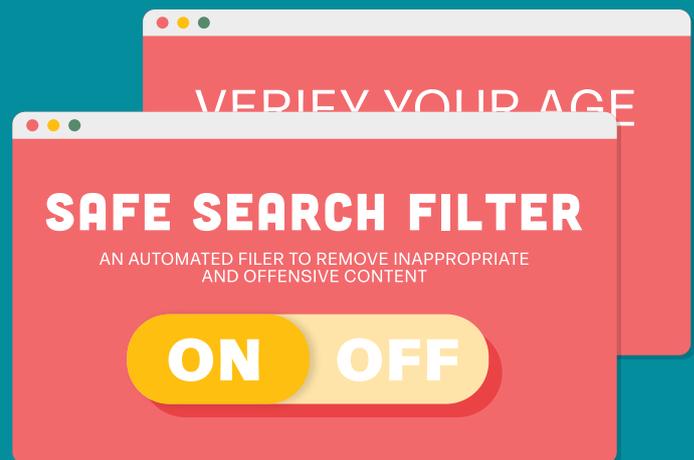# Common problems online

Young people who have been through a lot can have low self-confidence. Sometimes, that means they don't care about their safety. It's hard to stay safe if you don't think you're worth protecting. Reminding our kids that they are valued and cared for goes a long way towards protecting them. And it helps them remember to protect themselves.

We can encourage young people to use 'safe search' and other features to avoid sexual, extreme, and violent content.

Most young people will, at some point, encounter unpleasant or harmful content online – sometimes on purpose, sometimes by accident.

Talking about what they've seen can help young people deal with it.

VERIFY YOUR AGE

SAFE SEARCH FILTER

AN AUTOMATED FILER TO REMOVE INAPPROPRIATE AND OFFENSIVE CONTENT

ON OFF

Don't jump to conclusions!

Curiosity is normal, and many kids google words they don't understand – or they might do it for a dare. Sometimes, inappropriate content is just kids being kids.

Bullying might be aggressive, or it might be a misunderstanding.

It's good to be suspicious, and careful. Talk to your kids about the risks, and sensible things we can all do to stay safe.

"Foster kids just want to be loved, like everyone else. And predators know what they're doing, they know what to say. If kids can actually speak to you about things like that, it's a lot better."

- Michelle, carer.

Common problems online

Problems with people

Bullying

Bullying happens online and offline. Online bullying can be relentless. For some young people, it can feel like there's no safe place.

Disallowed contact

Kids in care often have people who are not allowed to contact them. Sometimes those people reach out or stalk them online.

Grooming

Predators may pretend to be kind and loving at first, and win our trust. It can be strangers online, but can also be boyfriends, teachers or other people we know. This can become serious abuse.

Harmful relationships

Some people in their 20s or 30s seek out relationships with much younger people. They tell them they love them, and give gifts, money and affection. Vulnerable young people might think they are in love, and be pressured into drugs, sex, sending nude photos, and dangerous situations.

Problems with content

X-rated content

Sexual content on the internet can be educational or sexy and fun. It can also be overwhelming and harmful. Porn is often unrealistic and misogynistic, but young people might not recognise that. Young people need help to understand what's healthy, realistic and appropriate.

Violent content

Violence can seem exciting or cool, but it can quickly escalate. It can make viewers feel upset, disturbed and traumatised.

Self-harm

Young people sometimes seek out self-harm content. Some online spaces may actually encourage self-harm, including eating disorders.

Radicalisation

Some people use the internet to promote things like white supremacy and misogyny. Young people looking to belong can be more vulnerable.

Problems with behaviour

Online addiction

Lots of parents worry about addictive behaviours, especially with gaming and social media. Encouraging breaks and other activities can help.

Lack of sleep and self-care

Time can get away from you online – suddenly it's well past bedtime, and self-care activities like showering haven't happened. Young people need support to set good habits.

Hacking and crime

Young people can be victims and perpetrators of crime online. They can be scammed or pressured to do illegal things. We need to understand what our young people are up to.

Peer perpetrators

Children and young people who have been hurt sometimes become peer perpetrators. They may share inappropriate content with their friends, or pressure friends into unsafe activities.